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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda items 116 (a) and (d)
Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments; comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 21 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a statement issued today, 21 August, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea regarding Ethiopia's gross violation of human rights (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 116 (a) and (d), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

00-61484 (E) 240800

Annex to the letter dated 21 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

21 August 2000

Ethiopia's gross violation of human rights can never be whitewashed

It is a matter of public record that, as a result of Ethiopia's expansionist designs, a simple border dispute that could have been resolved by peaceful means has ended up being the biggest war in Africa. This tragic war has incurred enormous destruction and the loss of precious lives.

What is perhaps more painful is the negative and long-term impact on the hitherto solid relationship of the two brotherly people's caused by Ethiopia's deliberate and calculated policy of ethnic hatred. As has been documented, this has resulted in the wilful persecution of ethnic Eritreans in Ethiopia throughout the past two years, the overwhelming majority of whom have been deported with the confiscation of their life-long earnings; many have died in prison under torture; thousands more are missing and others continue to languish in the Dedesa and other concentration camps.

These gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law were not unavoidable occurrences associated with war. They were rather the products of a deliberate and calculated ethnic policy. In fact, they were invoked and articulated by none other than the Ethiopian Prime Minister who, only two years ago, justified the illegal — and indeed immoral — persecution of ethnic Eritreans in the face of international disapprobation. In an official interview, the Prime Minister declared: "Ethiopia has the sovereign right to expel anyone the colour of whose eyes it did not like" and that "his government's action was no different from what the United States Government was doing to Mexicans".

Ethiopia's gross violation of basic humanitarian and international law have intensified in the past three months, especially in the sovereign Eritrean territories it continues to occupy following the invasion that it launched last May. As the following facts illustrate, the regime:

- Extended its policy of ethnic cleansing to expel 15,000 Eritreans from their own territory in the southern Gash region in Eritrea by confiscating their livestock and other property;
- Continued to deport ethnic Eritreans from Ethiopia and dump them at unannounced border posts;
- Engaged in State vandalism to wilfully destroy private, commercial and public assets including schools, hospitals and other developmental installations in the areas under its control;
- Brought civilian "looting teams" from Ethiopia to ransack the property of villagers in the areas that fell under its occupation;
- Killed 239 civilians (121 in the southern zone and 117 in the western zone respectively) while causing the disappearance of 36 others. Its army of

occupation has abducted several youths between the ages of 9 and 14 in the southern zone and raped many women (the full report is being compiled by independent bodies).

It is against this dismal human rights record that Ethiopia is today falsely accusing Eritrea of perpetrating "violations of human rights" of Ethiopians living in Eritrea including detaining them in "concentration camps and slave labour!". These preposterous allegations are inspired by three motives:

- Ethiopia's unwillingness to receive its own nationals;
- Its desire to torpedo the peace process through unfounded excuses;
- Its desire to portray the Government of Eritrea as an equal violator of human rights with itself and thereby whitewash its crimes.

The facts are otherwise clear. Eritrea did not initiate, and has not followed in the footsteps of Ethiopia, to pursue a dangerous and shortsighted policy of ethnic cleansing. It is a matter of record that Eritrea took responsible measures, including through a parliamentary bill and public campaigns, to stem the inflammation of ethnic hatred and to ensure the respect of the rights of Ethiopians residing in Eritrea.

The massive population dislocation induced by Ethiopia's invasion has however compelled Eritrea to make arrangements for the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopians with the collaboration of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The overwhelming majority of these Ethiopians had fled their residences in Eritrean villages and towns in the face of the targeting of civilians by the Ethiopian armed forces. Obviously, there were also those who were not in possession of valid residence or work permits.

Eritrea has scrupulously adhered to the letter and spirit of human rights and humanitarian laws and strictly followed the procedures that govern repatriation. No property was confiscated; no house was expropriated; no bank account was frozen. There was no torture, degrading treatment, or any other form of abuse. It is to be understood that Eritrea has the right under human rights and humanitarian law to repatriate any Ethiopians with no valid papers in view of the fact that the Ethiopian Government unilaterally revoked the bilateral agreement which exempted each other's nationals from the standard requirements of legal residence.

Eritrea's responsible policy and record of the treatment of Ethiopians living in Eritrea has met the approval of credible human rights organizations and agencies. This policy will continue especially as both sides have signed an agreement on cessation of hostilities. On the other hand, it must be recognized that Ethiopia has an obligation to receive its own nationals, those who want to go back voluntarily as well as those who may have to be repatriated because they do not possess the necessary legal documents.

Eritrea will continue to make sure that the process of repatriation will be conducted in a manner that ensures the safety and dignity of those affected. To this end, it has sought, and will continue to seek, the active involvement of ICRC in the process through the provision of logistical support and escort. This has been made impossible in the past few weeks because the Ethiopian Government refused to cooperate, thereby blocking ICRC involvement in monitoring the process.

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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 167
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Note verbale dated 18 August 2000 from the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to request that he include the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization" (item 167 of the agenda of the fifty-fourth session) in the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The Government of Austria would like this question to be debated in plenary meeting, without being referred to a Main Committee.

The Government of Austria would also like this question to remain on the agenda of all subsequent sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

00-61667 (E) 220800

United Nations A/54/967

General Assembly

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Fifty-fourth session
Item 30
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Letter dated 18 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Aleksandr Lukashenko, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing in Helsinki of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 30.

(*Signed*) Alyaksandr **Sychov**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

00-61732 (E) 250800 250800

Annex to the letter dated 18 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. A. G. Lukashenko, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

The signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe a quarter of a century ago in Helsinki marked the conclusion of the unprecedented negotiations among the representatives of 33 European countries, the United States of America and Canada on the drafting of a document that has become the cornerstone for building a Europe free of dividing lines. The signing of the Final Act began a qualitatively new phase in the development of the continent, which for many centuries had been the scene of wars and conflicts.

Over the past years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has become a key regional organization with a developed system of institutions and mechanisms and whose jurisdiction extends from Vancouver to Vladivostok and includes all aspects of security.

The Istanbul Summit of OSCE in 1999 was the outgoing century's final concerted effort to realize the desire of peoples for mutually advantageous cooperation and confidence-building measures, the impetus for which was given in Helsinki on 1 August 1975, and a historic milestone in the laying of the groundwork for European security in the twenty-first century.

Today it is very important that the principles contained in the documents of these European forums should become a real guide to action and not remain mere lip service.

Belarus supports the efforts being made to strengthen OSCE and declares its commitment to the fundamental principles of the document signed in Helsinki. Any attempt to depart from these principles, which have stood the test of time and have been confirmed in international practice, can lead to serious consequences that jeopardize regional security.

Belarus is in favour of strengthening all aspects of security in full accordance with the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act and other basic OSCE documents. Military and political measures without the concerted efforts of States in the field of economic and environmental security will not guarantee an untroubled future for Europe. Human rights are an important — but not the only — component of the concept of comprehensive security. The recent tendency to focus on human rights issues and the increasingly obvious transformation of OSCE into an instrument for the "democratic monitoring" of countries of the former Soviet bloc demonstrate the clear intention of some members of OSCE to concentrate that organization's activities on individual aspects that are advantageous to them and on "difficult" countries instead of solving a whole range of urgent problems relating to the development of Europe as a whole.

In this connection, I should like to draw attention to the danger of narrowing the competence of OSCE, the logical consequence of which will be its loss of prestige as an impartial proponent of the interests of all its members.

Unfortunately, the economic potential of OSCE envisaged in the Final Act has so far remained largely untapped. Belarus is in favour of stepping up the activities of OSCE in the economic and environmental fields, eliminating discrimination and trade barriers among the countries of the region under its jurisdiction, and creating conditions for minimizing the negative consequences of the expansion of economic unions for States that do not belong to them. It is particularly important that OSCE should provide the necessary political impetus for mutually advantageous economic cooperation and to develop clear-cut mechanisms for monitoring the obligations arising from such cooperation.

In the military and political fields, Belarus intends to press for the further strengthening of OSCE as the principal universal body for ensuring European security, greater effectiveness of the work of its main institutions, particularly its collective bodies, and the preservation of consensus as the basis for the operation of that organization. Belarus will actively support the priority role of OSCE, as defined in the Charter on European Security, in settling disputes in the region under its jurisdiction on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member countries, and strive for equal security of States that are members of military groups and of those that are not members of such groups.

Belarus is prepared to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the leading European structures, particularly OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, on questions of compliance with international obligations in the field of human rights, but only on the basis of equality and without the application of "double standards".

Belarus takes seriously its share of the responsibility for guaranteeing security and improving the welfare of Europe. A stable social development, in spite of economic difficulties, the absence of inter-ethnic or religious conflicts, in spite of a multi-ethnic population, the absence of any territorial claims or border tension with its neighbours are Belarus's important and direct contribution to the enhancement of European security. Belarus cannot exist outside of Europe, just as Europe cannot be one and indivisible without Belarus. The timely elimination of Belarus's political difficulties with a number of countries members of OSCE will only help to consolidate this constructive policy. A good basis for this is the holding in October 2000 of democratic, free and fair parliamentary elections in the Republic of Belarus.

Patience, progressive confidence-building and recognition of the supremacy of law and diplomacy — this is the path to genuine European unity based on the values common to all mankind.